COMMEMORATING WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

The Holy Mass was offered for the victims of Human Trafficking on 30th July 2019. Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director in his sermon said that Human trafficking is one of the world’s largest crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, it goes unnoticed by the majority of the society. He said that there was a need to raise our voices against such inhuman activities as stressed by the Holy Father. In such a context he said that he was glad that Caritas Sri Lanka was involved in addressing such issues through the Safe Migration programme.

Mr. Sajith Silva, Programme Manager, Integral Human Development, said that for us in the Catholic Church, we have a saint who is been adopted as the Patron Saint of Human Trafficking Survivors. St. Josephine Bakhita who was kidnapped and sold at the age of seven, went through the same human struggle as a trafficked victim.

We at Caritas Sri Lanka have worked for these victims for over thirty years and are continuing to do so. Under the Migration Project, the interventions we carry out also include activities to counter efforts against human trafficking.

VISIT OF SECRETARY GENERAL OF CARITAS NORWAY

Ms. Martha Rubiano, Secretary-General of Caritas Norway visited places of Easter Sunday terror attack including St. Anthony’s Shrine at Kochikade in Colombo and St. Sebastian’s Church at Katuwapitiya in Negombo on Friday 16th August 2019 and met victims of the Easter Sunday attack and listened to their experiences.

We at Caritas Sri Lanka have worked for these victims for over thirty years and are continuing to do so. Under the Migration Project, the interventions we carry out also include activities to counter efforts against human trafficking.

Ms. Rubiano was also able to meet with the Norwegian Ambassador in Sri Lanka to discuss about the progress of Caritas Norway supported projects and meet with the representative of the UN Food & Agricultural Organization in Sri Lanka and discuss possibilities of cooperation between Caritas Sri Lanka and the FAO in a project supported by Caritas Norway especially in issues related to climate change and agriculture.

NEW PROJECT - EMOTIONAL LITERACY SCHOOL

A new project funded by FONDIZIONE SAN ZENO from Italy to prevent school children from self harm and suicidal tendencies is being implemented in 6 Caritas Diocesan Centeres including Chilaw, Mannar, Jaffna, Kandy, Kurunegala and Trincomalee.

The specific objectives of this project are; (1) to increase emotional literacy and resilience among school students at risk of suicidal behaviours, (2) to increase students' soft skills for a healthier emotional and mental health, (3) to enhance teachers' emotional competencies and constructive vigilance among students. Project Orientation to Diocesan Coordinators was held at National Centre on 4th July 2019.
DEVELOPING POSITION PAPER ON GUIDELINES TO VOTERS

Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC invited a cross section of clergy, professionals and intellectuals on 16th September, 2019 for a consultation to develop a 'Position Paper' to draw guidelines to the members of the Christian institutions and churches on choosing an appropriate candidate for the forthcoming Presidential Election.

Fr. Director explained the objectives of the consultation and declared that this is a timely intervention considering the country's present political situation. Prof. Anton Meemana moderated the discussion and invited all the members to share their views and analysis on the present reality of the country.

Among the main points that were stressed included (1) the need to create voter awareness on the voting system including preferential voting system, (2) the need to set up a monitoring system to follow up on political party manifestos which offer attractive policy statements but do not say how these will be implemented (3) declaration of assets by politicians is vital not just at election time but throughout their careers, (4) Christians need a platform to express their views instead of having to go to the political platform.

A committee was appointed to finalize the paper. This will be submitted to the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Sri Lanka for approval and it will be shared with all the Christian institutions and parishes to create awareness among the people.

CIMS TOT WORKSHOP FOR DIOCESAN COORDINATORS

Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC organized a TOT workshop to enhance the knowledge of the Diocesan Staff on the Caritas Internationalis Management Standards and their application. The workshop was conducted over a period of 4-days from 23rd to 26th May 2019 for Tamil and Sinhala speaking coordinators from all the 13 Diocesan Centres at the SEDEC Auditorium. Mr. Kushal Neogy, Sub-regional Director – Partnerships (South Asia) of Catholic Relief Services conducted this programme.

BIANNUAL REVIEW MEETING OF FOOD SECURITY PROGRAM

Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC carried out a Biannual Review meeting of Food Security program on “Addressing Causes for Poverty and Ensuring Food Security for Farming Communities”, a Caritas Norway / NORAD funded agricultural supportive programme which is being implemented through our Diocesan network, covering all 25 districts of Sri Lanka.

The Biannual Review meeting of the programme was held on 18th and 19th July 2019 at the SEDEC Auditorium. The objective of this project is to ensure food security for the poor families, especially the children by providing them chemical-free vegetables and other food items for their own consumption from their own gardens.

The families are happy that they make small savings from their own gardens and learnt new techniques in the field of Organic Farming. The food security staff of all 13 Caritas Diocesan Centres consisting of 85 were present at this meeting. Each Diocesan Centre shared their efforts and experiences in implementing the above program in their areas during the last six months. This experience-sharing meeting will help us to understand and learn the progress status of the program islandwide.
Caritas Norway organized a pastoral solidarity visit to Sri Lanka with a delegation of 10 persons representing the Catholic Church of Oslo, Lutheran Church of Oslo, Interreligious Dialogue Forum of Oslo and Caritas Norway from 13th to 18th August 2019. The visit was jointly facilitated by Caritas Sri Lanka SEDEC and the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL). The objective of the visit was to express their solidarity and prayers to the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks and to meet with Religious Leaders and local communities and to listen to their experiences in promoting inter-religious harmony and peaceful coexistence in the country.

The delegation accompanied by Mr. Aron Halfen, Programme Advisor, Caritas Norway visited Kandy, Jaffna and Mannar and met with religious leaders of all faiths and members of inter-religious groups of the Religious Amity project funded by Caritas Norway/NORAD and exchanged views about the present state of inter-religious relations in the respective areas. The delegation while in Jaffna visited a pre-school in Alvety village where a nutrition programme of mothers’ of pre-school children is being conducted through the food security project. While in Colombo they had a discussion with the Cardinal Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith on the current situation of the country in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. They also met the Speaker, Hon. Karu Jayasuriya, members of the All Ceylon Jamiiyathul Ulama and the leaders of other Christian Churches who are the members of National Christian Council of Sri Lanka.

The Cambodian National Inter-Faith Forum on Combating Human Trafficking and Ending Modern Slavery was organized from 14th to 16th August 2019 and was presided over by the Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia, Minister of Interior and the Chairman of National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT).

Considering the strategic aspect of this forum and learning from the success of national campaign in Thailand in 2018, Caritas Asia too decided to make the 3rd National Interfaith Forum against human trafficking as a regional event by inviting 25-member organizations and wider network in Asia, including JCAP, Global Shepherd and Fountain of Life Cambodia.

The main objectives of the forum and the visits were to enhance the capacities of 25 Caritas Member Organizations in Asia in the field of Safe Migration and Anti Human Trafficking and to provide opportunities for cross-learning and mutual exchange of experiences and knowledge among the participants.

At this event, Sri Lanka was represented by Mr. Sajith Silva, Programme Manager, Integral Human Development, Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC. On the last day of the event, the representative from each member organizations had the opportunity to learn and share their country specific experiences with the other colleagues mainly from the Asian region.

Mr. Priyantha Fernando, Manager, Social Justice and Sustainable Peace Unit followed a Summer School Training Together towards Peace & Justice: International Training for Conflict Resolution, Mediation and Human Rights Protection”, organized by the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) held from 13th to 27th July 2019 at the Training Center on the Holy Mountain, Wuppertal in Germany.

The training sessions were conducted in a participatory manner, which included the group discussions, role-plays, presentations and devotional morning prayers. Towards the end of the training, participants designed local or regional peace projects, taking into consideration the knowledge acquired from the training and identifying potential strategies of implementation.
WORKSHOP ON COMMUNITY BASED REHABILITATION CONDUCTED BY CARITAS INDIA

A training programme on CBR focused on People with Disabilities including Children with Disabilities was conducted in Mannar from 15th to 25th September 2019, facilitated by personnel from Caritas India with funding provided by Kindermissionwerks of Germany.

The main focus of this training is to empower the community including People with Disabilities, so that they could advocate and lobby for their needs based on a Rights Based perspective. The workshop highlighted the many types of physical and mental disabilities that children and adults are stricken with, which could be genetically inherited or acquired after birth. Further, the workshop dealt with the many facets of community based rehabilitation with special reference to activities that parents of disable children and their family members could do in their own homes as well as the support that can be generated at the community level to address these needs. The participants were also able to learn about Rights Based Approaches by which they could lobby the government to support the PwDs and CwDs to address their health, educational and livelihood needs. The participants included staff from Caritas Mannar, HUDEC Vanni and the National Centre and community representatives from project locations.

DOCUMENTARY FILM ON FOOD SECURITY

In order to highlight the achievements of the food security project which has now completed 18 months of the four year programme, a documentary film has been produced by the Sustainable Agriculture Unit of Caritas Sri Lanka. The film portrays the challenges faced by farmers due to natural disasters and usage of agrochemicals and highlights the intervention of Caritas Sri Lanka, providing innovative solutions to these challenges and how the lives of farmer families including children and their mothers were enriched by this programme. The film has received praise from among the diaspora in Norway and offers to support projects related to food security have been received.

ADVOCACY ON SAFE LABOUR MIGRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES


The Position Paper which includes field level experiences of Caritas Sri Lanka network as well as research findings of the Deep Impact Partners on the plight of returnees migrants was handed over to Mr. P. P. Weerasekera, Deputy General Manager – Social Development, SLBFE (Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment) by Mr. Sajith Silva, Programme Manager, Ms. Beula Fernando, Migration Officer SLMP of Caritas Sri Lanka and Mr. Emmanuel Eimackshan, National Project Officer, SDC on 11th September 2019.

The report contained a number of recommendations and suggestions based on years of work and research carried out by the DIPs and other National level partners such as Caritas Sri Lanka and Helvetas.